



## **Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks**

Region One  
490 North Meridian Rd.  
Kalispell, MT 59901  
(406) 752-5501  
FAX: 406-257-0349  
Ref: JS102-05  
November 7, 2005

TO: \*Governor's Office, Attn: Mike Volesky, PO Box 200801, Helena, 59620-0801  
Environmental Quality Council, PO Box 201704, Helena, 59620-1704  
\*Dept. of Environmental Quality, Planning, Prevention & Assistance, PO Box 200901, Helena, 59620-0901  
\*Dept. of Environmental Quality, Permitting Compliance, PO Box 200901, Helena, 59620-0901  
DNRC, PO Box 201601, Helena, 59620-1601; Kalispell: Bob Sandman\*  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks - Director's Office: Reg Peterson, Parks: Tom Reilly, Walt Timmerman, Design  
& Construction: Paul Valle, Field Services: Bardell Mangum, & Legal Unit: Brandi Fisher  
\*Montana Historical Society, SHPO, 225 North Roberts, Veteran's Memorial Building, Helena, 59620-1201  
\*Montana State Library, 1515 East Sixth Ave., Helena, 59620-1800  
Jim Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, PO Box 1184, Helena, 59624  
George Ochenski, PO Box 689, Helena, 59624  
Wayne Hirst, Montana State Parks Foundation, PO Box 728, Libby, 59923  
Montana State Parks Association, PO Box 699, Billings, 59103  
Joe Gutkoski, President, Montana River Action Network, 304 N 18<sup>th</sup> Ave., Bozeman, 59715  
Rep. Bernie Olson, 161 Lakeside Blvd., Lakeside, 59922-9723  
Sen. Bob Keenan, Box 697, Bigfork, 59911-0697  
Flathead County Commissioners, 800 S Main Street, Kalispell, 59901  
Flathead County Library, 247 First Avenue E, Kalispell, 59901  
Interested Parties

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), Region One, has completed an environmental assessment (EA) for the purpose of renovating the Lone Pine State Park Interpretive Center. The project includes interior and exterior renovations, as well as new construction. Based on the analysis in the EA, Alternative C, to renovate the Lone Pine Interpretive Center, was found to be the preferred alternative.

Issues raised during the 30-day comment period are addressed in the record of decision, which is enclosed for your information. There were no changes to the draft EA; therefore, the draft becomes the final EA. Please direct your questions or comments to Dave Landstrom at the FWP Headquarters, 751-4574 or e-mail to [dlandstrom@mt.gov](mailto:dlandstrom@mt.gov).

Sincerely,

James R. Satterfield, Jr., Ph.D.  
Regional Supervisor

/ni  
Enclosure

**Record of Decision  
and  
Finding of No Significant Impact  
for  
Lone Pine Interpretive Center Capital Project  
Environmental Assessment**

**Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Region 1  
490 N. Meridian Road  
Kalispell, MT 59901**

**November 7, 2005**

**Description of Proposed Action**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes renovation of the Lone Pine Interpretive Center (LPIC) to make it energy-efficient, increase classroom and public meeting room size, and improve accessibility for people with disabilities. FWP also proposes to upgrade interpretive displays in accordance with the Lone Pine State Park Interpretive Plan.

FWP also proposes construction of an outdoor amphitheater and improved parking.

**Background**

This project was initiated because the LPIC is in need of significant renovation to correct serious deficiencies in energy efficiency, ADA compliance, fire prevention, and interpretive facilities.

The LPIC was constructed in 1984. The building is currently heated with electricity and does not hold heat effectively. Visitor facilities, such as restrooms, entranceways, and office areas, do not meet current ADA guidelines to provide good access to persons with disabilities. Cedar roofing and siding materials are far more flammable than currently available building materials, thus causing undue risk for fire loss.

The LPIC has struggled in the past to fulfill goals identified in citizen-based interpretive planning efforts due to a lack of professional interpretive staff, interactive displays, and classroom space. With the inception of an interpretive specialist position in 2003, interpretive programs and services to area schools and park visitors have been warmly received, and demand has increased dramatically. FWP feels that an investment in high quality interpretive displays and additional classroom/public meeting room space will help satisfy this demand.

## **Alternatives**

Following are brief descriptions of the three alternatives that were developed in the draft environmental assessment (EA):

### **Alternative A – No Action**

Under this alternative, repairs and upgrades would not be made to the LPIC, and a piecemeal approach would be taken to keeping the building functional, utilizing Lone Pine's annual operations budget and a portion of Region One's major maintenance budget. FWP would continue to operate the facility seasonally, and interpretive services and facility rentals would continue to be conducted April through October. FWP would not increase school programming. Interpretive displays would not be upgraded.

### **Alternative B – LPIC Interpretive Display Upgrades**

FWP would invest approximately \$419,000 to design and build a series of thematic, interactive interpretive displays.

This alternative would not address the energy efficiency and ADA compliance issues that currently face the LPIC. The LPIC would continue to be closed from October through March to avoid excessive heating costs. The LPIC would not increase interpretive programs.

### **Alternative C – LPIC Renovation**

FWP would renovate the LPIC to make it energy efficient and firewise. Interior space would be maximized, and classroom/public meeting room size would be increased. The entire facility would be improved to meet all current ADA requirements.

Interpretive displays would be upgraded by creating interactive displays, and classroom and public meeting room rentals and interpretive programming would be available year-round.

In this alternative, FWP would spend approximately \$419,000 to design and build a series of thematic, interactive interpretive displays for year-round viewing. Approximately \$877,000 would be spent to renovate the LPIC to improve efficiency, ADA access, fire safety, and provide a larger public classroom/rental facility and an outdoor amphitheater with improved parking.

## **Public Comment**

Public Comment was solicited on the draft EA from September 9, 2005, through October 10, 2005. A total of 22 letters and e-mails were submitted with comments regarding this project. Eighteen of the respondents supported the proposal, with three comments suggesting specific alterations to the preferred alternative. Four respondents voiced opposition to this proposal. Issues raised during the comment period are addressed below.

## **Issues**

### **Land acquisition seen as a higher priority:**

In two comments, land acquisition was viewed as a higher priority than renovation of the LPIC. Forty-one acres were added to Lone Pine in 2001 to bring the park to its current 229 acres. FWP has maintained dialogue with bordering property owners who have expressed interest in selling property to the department for the purpose of adding recreational opportunities for the public and continues to pursue opportunities as they arise.

### **Noxious weed control:**

In two comments, noxious weed control was mentioned as a higher priority than the LPIC renovation. FWP agrees with the importance of noxious weed abatement at Lone Pine and has committed to increased efforts in the coming years. The Lone Pine State Park Management Plan of 2003 states the objective of developing a noxious weed control plan by 2005. During the summer of 2005, FWP contracted with a local botanist to inventory noxious weeds within Lone Pine and to develop a long-range treatment plan. FWP will begin implementation of this plan in 2006.

### **Additional funding for new program and staffing:**

Two respondents expressed concern that FWP would incur additional personnel costs by implementing this project. FWP intends to continue to operate the LPIC with current staffing for the immediate future. Current staffing includes a .75 FTE interpretive specialist, a .25 FTE seasonal park attendant, a volunteer park host, and additional volunteers as needed.

### **Facility replication:**

One respondent felt that the LPIC resource room would replicate a facility already available at the FWP headquarters building in Kalispell. One of the primary functions of the LPIC resource room is to provide a classroom facility at the park in which interpretive programs can be delivered to school groups. Through October 31 of 2005, 53 field trips have been conducted at the LPIC. The public meeting room at FWP is generally fully booked and not available for programming at this level of frequency. Additionally the FWP headquarters does not provide the immediate access to the Lone Pine grounds and opportunities for conservation education that the LPIC does. Finally, the LPIC resource room will be available for some meetings and other public uses that are not accommodated at FWP headquarters.

### **Trails:**

One comment was received that this project would affect the development or alteration of the Lone Pine State Park trail system. This project does not have a trails component, and none of the project funding will be spent to alter the current trail system.

### **Conflicts with funding for fisheries and wildlife funding:**

One concern was voiced that this project conflicts with recent increases in hunting and fishing fees, and increased costs for stocking fish, big game monitoring, wolf

management, and water monitoring. Funding for wildlife and fisheries efforts are funded through different funding sources than state parks. There will be no fisheries or wildlife funding, including license revenues, utilized in this proposal. Funding for parks projects comes from a \$4 fee on vehicle registration, from earned revenues, and from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). By law, this project will not compete with or add cost to any fisheries or wildlife programs.

**Size of public resource room:**

Three respondents commented that the LPIC resource room should be expanded to accommodate up to 120 persons. The room currently has a maximum capacity of 50 persons, and under Alternative C, the room will be expanded to accommodate up to 75 persons. Without substantially expanding parking spaces outside of the LPIC, there would not be sufficient room to accommodate the vehicles associated with groups of 120 persons on a regular basis. Through analysis of public comment, FWP feels that the proposed expansion of the LIPC as stated in Alternative C will be a good compromise between providing additional space and maintaining the park's natural character.

**Finding of no significant impact (FONSI):**

Based on analysis in the EA, I find Alternative C to be the preferred alternative. I have evaluated the EA and applicable laws, regulations, and policies and have determined that this action will not have a significant impact on the human or physical environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

The final EA and the FONSI may be viewed at or obtained from Montana, Fish, Wildlife & Parks headquarters office at 490 North Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901.

In accordance with FWP policy, an appeal may be made by any person who has either commented in writing to the department on the proposed project, or who has registered or commented orally at a public meeting held by the department on the proposed project, or who can provide new evidence that would otherwise change the proposed plan. An appeal must be submitted to the director of FWP in writing and must be postmarked or received within 30 days of this record of decision. The appeal must describe the basis for the appeal, how the appellant has previously commented to the department or participated in the decision-making process, and how the department can provide relief. The appeal should be mailed to: Director, Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Helena, MT 59620.

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James R. Satterfield, Jr., Ph.D.  
Regional Supervisor

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Date